

We talked about the need to make sure that in parts of Louisiana that are getting flooded now—rural Louisiana—that MREs and water and ice get delivered to those communities as quickly as possible.

As a Governor of a neighboring State, I remember often how people would say, “All they care about is the big cities.” And I understand there’s a lot of focus on New Orleans, and there should be focus on New Orleans. But in the briefings today, it is clear that this State is focused as well as on people who live in rural Louisiana and in the smaller towns of Louisiana. And so the efforts will be aimed at helping people there.

Bobby talked about the need for—to release energy or oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Last night we got a request from a company doing business here in Louisiana, and we met that request. And if—so oil was released from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And we will continue to do that upon requests by companies.

All in all, the response has been excellent, but the people here understand that there is more work to be done. And that’s why I came down here with members of the Federal Government to listen and to figure out how to help.

I can’t thank you all enough for working as hard as you are. Looking around, I can see that some people may not have had much sleep recently. [*Laughter*] The people of your State care a lot about the fact that you are working as hard as you are. And if this helps you keep going, I want to thank you, and I want to thank all the volunteers and the faith-based community that always rises up in a challenge like this. They listen to that universal call to love a neighbor like you’d like to be loved yourself. And that’s happening here in Louisiana again. And I know the people that are—whose lives have been affected appreciate a total stranger coming in to help.

And finally, the people in Louisiana must know that all across our country there’s a lot of prayer, prayer for those whose lives have been turned upside down. And I’m one of

them. It’s good to come down here. Governor, I can’t thank you enough for your leadership and your team’s leadership, and we stand ready to help.

And now I’m going to come around and thank every one of you for working. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:08 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Situation in Georgia

September 3, 2008

Last month, Russia invaded a sovereign neighbor and violated Georgia’s territorial integrity. The people of Georgia withstood the assault from the Russian military, and the international community rallied to stand with the people of Georgia and their democratically elected Government.

Early in the crisis, I directed a series of steps to demonstrate America’s solidarity with Georgia, including instructing Secretary Gates to oversee a mission by the U.S. military to provide humanitarian aid for the people of Georgia. Since the conflict began, our Nation has provided nearly \$30 million in humanitarian assistance to Georgia, including more than 1,200 tons of food and other relief supplies delivered by the U.S. military. While that mission continues, the United States is also prepared to help Georgia rebuild and regain its position as one of the world’s fastest growing economies.

On Monday, September 1, European leaders announced that the European Union is prepared to provide aid for reconstruction in Georgia, including the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and would soon convene an international conference to assist Georgia in its reconstruction. The United States applauds the actions taken by the European Union, and we will participate in the EU’s reconstruction conference.

As part of America's contribution to this international effort, today I am announcing \$1 billion in additional economic assistance to meet Georgia's humanitarian needs and to support its economic recovery. More than half of these funds will be made available in the near term and will support reconstruction efforts in Georgia, assist the Government of Georgia in leading the nation's recovery, and meet ongoing humanitarian needs, including the resettlement of displaced families. The balance of the funds, together with assistance from the European Union and other partners, will help the Government of Georgia rebuild critical infrastructure and help local communities and businesses get back on their feet. My administration looks forward to working with Congress on elements of this package. The Vice President will brief Georgia's leadership on this package when he visits Tbilisi tomorrow.

Today I have also directed a number of Federal agencies to expand their support for Georgia's economic recovery. U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab will take steps to expand trade and investment in Georgia, by negotiating an enhanced bilateral investment treaty and expanding preferential access to the U.S. market for Georgian exports. Secretary of Commerce Gutierrez will assist U.S. firms interested in trade and investment in Georgia and dispatch a trade mission to Georgia in the coming weeks. Secretary of Transportation Peters will make available risk insurance to support U.S. maritime commerce with Georgia. Secretary of the Treasury Paulson will continue to lead our efforts to coordinate assistance efforts with international financial institutions, and Secretaries Rice and Gates will continue to coordinate with our international partners to ensure that our aid is delivered swiftly to those who need it most.

Georgia has a strong economic foundation and leaders with an impressive record of reform. Our additional economic assistance will help the people of Georgia recover from the

assault on their country and continue to build a prosperous and competitive economy.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Proclamation 8285—National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, 2008

September 3, 2008

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are helping to extend lifelines of learning throughout our country. During Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, we pay tribute to these distinguished institutions.

Our Nation's HBCUs help unlock the great potential within students by providing quality higher education to traditionally underserved communities. By offering all students an opportunity to develop their skills and talents, HBCUs are helping more Americans realize the promise of our Nation.

My Administration is committed to promoting equal opportunities and access to higher education for all students. Since 2001, funding for HBCUs and Historically Black Graduate Institutions has increased. Additionally, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 makes college more affordable for low-income students by increasing funding for Federal Pell Grants by more than \$11 billion. The Act also helps HBCUs increase educational opportunities in the critical fields of math, science, technology, and foreign languages. By educating all of America's students, we are investing in our next generation of leaders and contributing to a more hopeful people and a more prosperous America.